

Disaster Planning for the Farm

The time to prepare for disasters is before they occur. Plans should be made, written and kept in a safe place that is quickly accessible. The first step in planning is to determine what type of disaster could impact the farm. Once you consider the risks, decisions can be made about what actions can be taken in advance, and what actions would need to be taken once the disaster occurs.

Mitigation

Hazard mitigation is defined as any action taken to eliminate or reduce the long-term risk to life and property from natural or technological hazards. Some examples of mitigation might be tying down buildings or barns with ground anchors to withstand wind damage, redirecting the impact away from a vulnerable area by digging water channels or planting vegetation to absorb water, or constructing berms, levees or permanent barriers to control flooding. The farm and buildings should be assessed to determine what mitigation procedures should be followed based on the hazard risk. These procedures could include:

- Building or repairing barns and buildings so they exceed building codes. Constructing or moving buildings to higher ground, replacing or covering glass windows and doors with sturdier materials, keeping drainage furrows sodded; cleaning or moving trash piles, moving or storing toxic chemicals, pesticides, herbicides in secured areas to prevent their washing onto pastures where animals could be exposed or where chemicals could wash into streams or contaminate food supplies; securing loose items, and draining or building levees around ponds that could flood.
- Important papers that contain emergency contacts and suppliers should be part of your plan. Supplies that may be needed during or after the disaster should be obtained and readily available after the disaster. Animals should be kept current on all vaccinations and booster shots and written records should be kept. Disruption in the environment could cause an increase in the spread of infectious disease, so proper vaccination could protect the animals.
- If evacuation of farm animals is being considered, then the evacuation procedures, places and routes should be in the plan. Since all animals may not be able to be evacuated, owners should decide before the disaster which animals are the most important to save. Animal evacuation should not interfere with human evacuation routes. Places where the animals will be taken should be decided in advance and arrangements made. Feed and water supplies should be available. Animals should be photographed and permanently identified.



Photo: Natasha Godwin

Preparing the Farm

Planning ahead can minimize damage to livestock, property and recovery time. You should:

- Establish escape routes for cows, horses, sheep and other livestock to higher elevation in case of flooding.
- Drive large animals out of barns that may be flooded. They will often seek shelter in barns in emergency situations.
- Make sure livestock have a good source of food and water.
- Move hay, machinery, fuels, pesticides, fertilizers and other chemicals out of flood-prone areas.
- Turn off electrical power to machines, barns, and other structures that may become damaged or flooded.
- Secure loose items, such as lumber, logs, pipes, machinery parts, and tools.

*For more information on disaster preparedness visit
http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/hot_topics/disaster_prep/hurricane_prep_ag.html*

DISASTER SUPPLY KIT

In addition to family disaster kits, agriculture producers should also keep on hand additional supplies to protect the farm. These include:

- Sandbags and plastic sheeting, in case of flood
- Wire and rope to secure objects
- Lumber and plywood to protect windows
- Extra fuel for tractors and vehicles stored in a safe location
- Hand tools to assist in preparation and recovery
- Fire extinguishers at all barns and in all vehicles
- A safe supply of food to feed livestock
- A gas-powered generator in case of power failure